



## ARTICLE

# The political power of evoking fear: the shining example of Germany's anti-TTIP campaign movement

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**Abstract** In Germany and Austria, an unprecedented political communication campaign orchestrated by a small group of well-connected politicians, green and left-wing political parties, and associated civil society organisations has evoked strong aversion among the population to the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP) between the EU and the US. Germany's anti-TTIP groups want nothing less than to take their protests to other European countries. The network's campaigns are largely driven by myths and fears evoked by emotive narratives and powerful metaphors. Their reasoning has strong persuasive power though. This article sheds light on who the campaign movement's major protagonists are, the messages they spread, their objectives, and how their deceptive argumentation threatens social interaction, pluralist societies and individual economic freedom.

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This article is partly based on a comprehensive study conducted by the European Centre for International Economy (ECIPE), Brussels, titled *The Political Power of Going Negative: German Riders and European Horses in Anti-TTIP Protests*, published in October 2016.

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## Introduction

‘TTIP is an attack on democracy’, ‘TTIP kills’, ‘Kill TTIP’, ‘TTIP protest picnic’, and ‘Tango against the TTIP’—in Germany, the protest activities of the anti-Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP) lobbying groups are presented in colourful, but unambiguous ways. The campaign network’s core institutions are not only inventive: they are also resourceful. Based on generous public funding and private donations, political parties, political foundations and environmental groups, as well as clerical and long-established anti-globalisation organisations are able to maintain influential networks. The protest groups’ activities are coordinated and utilised by green and left-wing political parties that are searching for anti-establishment political profiles by spreading highly emotive messages about TTIP. In the recent past, their political catch-phrases have had strong persuasive power.

## The persuasive power of being negative about TTIP

A recent survey commissioned by the Bertelsmann Foundation reported that the European majority welcomes TTIP, but that Germany and Austria are particularly sceptical. A major matter of concern is that, since 2014, Germany has seen a dramatic erosion of what had been a fundamentally positive opinion of trade (Bertelsmann Foundation 2016). Recent survey data from Infratest dimap suggests that some 70% of German citizens oppose TTIP, almost twice the average in other EU countries (Infratest dimap 2016; Eurobarometer 2015). What is worrying for supporters of open and well-regulated markets and pluralist societies is that the negative sentiment towards TTIP that the protest campaigns have evoked has already spilled over into other European countries. These include not only France (Fabry 2015), but countries that are known for their citizens’ general support of open markets and pluralist societies, such as Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK (van Ham 2016).

Many observers on both sides of the Atlantic can attest to German citizens’ pronounced levels of risk aversion, frequently described as ‘German angst’. Others argue that many Germans show distinct levels of anti-Americanism, especially after the revelation of the US National Security Agency’s spying affairs (see, e.g. Sparding 2014). In addition, as is argued by Kolev (2016), the less trust German citizens place in the EU’s institutions, the greater their aversion to TTIP. The data discussed by Kolev explains why the majority of TTIP critics are generally in favour of free trade. However, with many people being of the opinion that TTIP is being shaped behind closed doors, the negotiations fuel the perception that German interests are being sold out in Brussels.

In addition, in an article titled ‘Germany’s Strange Turn Against Trade’, Fratzscher (2016), a well-known leftist German economist, argues that Germany’s position as

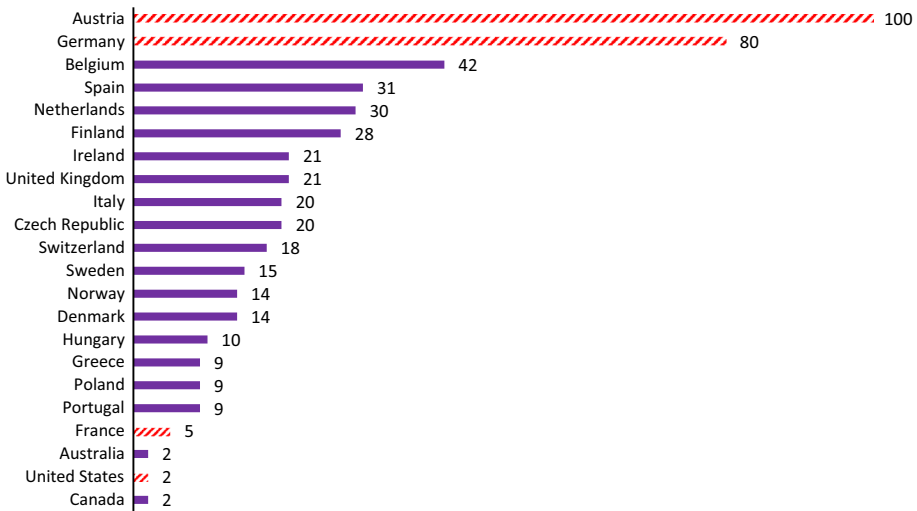
‘Europe’s economic superstar’ has caused a general aversion to changing the status quo. Furthermore, Fratzscher argues, TTIP aversion in Germany is rooted in the general surge in populist and nationalist politics in the Western world, as well as in the widely perceived inequality in society, and perceptions related to wealth and income distribution.

*Financial Times* trade correspondent Donnan (2016) summarises that, in ‘Europe, protesters are taking to the streets against the agreement, while populists on both the right and the left have it in their sights as an easy proxy for both suspicion of Brussels and a thinly-veiled anti-Americanism’. Similarly, while the economist Freytag (2016) draws parallels between right-wing populist reasoning and anti-TTIP campaigning in Germany, *Politico* reporter von der Burchard (2016b) comments that ‘protectionist winds are blowing stronger than in a long time on both sides of the Atlantic—the product, in part, of a coordinated campaign by a panoply of organisations sceptical of globalization’.

The reflections outlined above draw a realistic picture of the causes and symptoms of TTIP opposition in Germany. What they fail to elucidate, however, is the mind-penetrating force of those groups and individuals, including the influential figureheads of well-established political parties, that created the anti-TTIP scene in Germany in the first place, and who have since attempted to expand it to other European countries. Their simplistic narratives on TTIP aim to take advantage of German citizens’ negative attitudes towards the US National Security Agency’s spying, anti-Americanism, aversion to Brussels-made EU policymaking, and widespread anti-capitalist and anti-inequality sentiments.

## Obstinate and deliberately unteachable

Irrespective of the innumerable clarifications made by leading German and European politicians and the European Commission, it is particularly worrying that Germany’s major anti-TTIP groups have not distanced themselves from their original reasoning with respect to their major campaigns. Their original, alarmist and sensational narratives are still spread via online social media and Google-advertised calls for online petitions. Accordingly, Germany’s (and Austria’s) leading anti-TTIP groups have continued to spread messages that evoke widespread fears about TTIP and the EU–Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Their key narratives are: ‘TTIP encourages the proliferation of genetically modified organisms in the EU’, ‘TTIP and CETA are an attack on democracy’, ‘TTIP allows the United States to veto and eventually block EU law-making’, and ‘TTIP allows multinational corporations to sue EU governments for enforcing laws on consumer, health and environmental safety’. It is crucial to understand, however, that all of these claims fail to pass the validity check. Von der Burchard (2016a) notes that by using such arguments, TTIP has ‘elevated [German non-governmental organisations] to positions of unprecedented influence. Their coffers have swollen with funds, enabling them to boost their staff and their political profile.’

**Figure 1 Google search interest by country.**

Source: Google Trends (n. d.) and Bauer (2016a).

Note: Query conducted on 30 August 2016. Numbers do not convey absolute search volumes.

Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart. If, for example, at most 10% of searches for the given region and time frame were for 'TTIP', it is taken as 100.

Covers the period from January 2013 to June 2016.

## Online campaigning: setting the stage for what German citizens think about TTIP

Until recently German citizens had not been particularly interested in the negotiation of (free) trade agreements. However, the metaphorical messages spread by Germany's major anti-TTIP groups have triggered widespread, far-higher-than-average interest in Germany. At the same time, anti-TTIP campaigns have had strong persuasive powers. For the period January 2013 to June 2016, Google Trends data shows that citizens' interest in searching for TTIP is by far the strongest in Austria and Germany (Figure 1). It is striking that interest in TTIP is three times higher in Germany than in Spain, 20 times higher than in France and 40 times higher than in Canada and the US.

Since TTIP negotiations started in 2013, a colourful alliance of Germany's anti-globalisation, Marxist, Christian and, particularly, environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and political parties have run forceful campaigns against a trade agreement whose chapters have yet to be written.<sup>1</sup> The precise motivations of each individual protest group are difficult to disentangle. Most NGOs and political parties

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the declared members of Germany's anti-TTIP alliance, TTIPunfairhandelbar ('TTIP non-negotiable'), see the list of member organisations: TTIPunfairhandelbar (n. d.).

argue that TTIP poses a threat to European consumer and environmental protection standards. Some call TTIP a substantial threat to democracy due to its opaque negotiations and the inclusion of investor–state dispute settlement procedures (see Table 1).

Highly professional campaigning organisations have managed to exploit the citizens' (largely uninformed) reservations about the US, Brussels-centred policymaking and multinational enterprises (see Kolev 2016; Sparding 2014).

The remarkable interest of German and Austrian citizens in TTIP is also reflected by the content and relative number of Google Search queries related to TTIP (Figure 2). Eight of the 20 top Google queries related to TTIP were exclusively searched for in German. Another eight queries included generic terms that generally apply both in German and other languages. Six of the top 20 queries were biased towards a negative view of TTIP. 'TTIP demo', where 'demo' is short for protest demonstration, ranked first among the TTIP-related queries, while 'Stop TTIP', an initiative against TTIP that has its origins in Germany and is coordinated by German campaign groups, ranked fourth (Table 2).

By comparison, only 1 in the top 20 queries was in Spanish. The query ranked rather low down the list and, importantly, conveys a rather more neutral sentiment (*TTIP que es* [What is TTIP?]). The same applies for searches in English. The interest in TTIP and the negative sentiment conveyed by the Google searches is the consequence of a highly professional campaign.

Online (social) media has played a critical role in spreading a negative image of TTIP. Declared anti-TTIP groups' messages are primarily spread through social media. Almost 80% of anti-TTIP groups' messages are spread via Twitter, while 20% of their posts are spread through Facebook. As my analysis (Bauer 2015c) shows for the period June to December 2014, negative online media reporting about TTIP in Germany was more than 20 times higher than positive reporting. Declared anti-TTIP groups easily dominated the online media debate. In the period July to December 2014, anti-TTIP groups' announcements in Germany amounted to 83% of the total online media coverage of the subject on average, rising to 93% at peak times. Peak-time media reporting took place around the time of the TTIP negotiation rounds. Eighty-five per cent of the total number of TTIP-related posts were originally authored and spread by anti-TTIP groups.

Even more significantly, from the very beginning of the negotiations, negative reporting about TTIP on social media was reinforced by sponsored search results from anti-TTIP groups on search engines such as Google. As a consequence, even those citizens (e.g. interested pupils and students) who searched for a balanced perspective about the agreement were rarely able to find one in German on the Internet. In September 2016, for example, Google adverts sponsored by Germany's green political party The Alliance '90/the Greens (hereafter the Green Party) and civil society organisations Foodwatch, Publik Forum (an organisation rooted in Christian religious beliefs), BUND and Greenpeace Germany ranked first in simple searches for TTIP. Such adverts had titles including 'The green position on TTIP', 'Stop TTIP now', 'The war on TTIP', and 'Stop CETA

**Table 1 Narratives and phrases used about TTIP by Germany's most active anti-TTIP organisations.**

Claim	Spread by				
	Attac Germany <sup>a</sup>	Campact (funded by Attac members) <sup>b</sup>	Foodwatch Germany <sup>c</sup>	Greenpeace Germany <sup>d</sup>	German Federation for the Environment and Nature Conservation (BUND) <sup>e</sup>
TTIP allows for the proliferation of GMOs in the EU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TTIP is an attack on democracy and the right to regulate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TTIP allows the US and/or multinational corporations to block EU laws	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TTIP allows multinational corporations to sue EU governments for enforcing laws on consumer safety, health and environmental safety	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Table 1 continued**

Claim	Spread by			
	Attac Germany <sup>a</sup>	Campact (funded by Attac members) <sup>b</sup>	Foodwatch Germany <sup>c</sup>	Greenpeace Germany <sup>d</sup>
Political catchphrases	'Freihandelsfalle TTIP' [TTIP is a free trade trap]; 'Konzernes machen Staaten den Prozess' [Multinational enterprises rule over governments]; 'Technokraten entfachten Parlämente' [Technocrats deprive governments of power]	'Stoppt TTIP' [Stop TTIP]; 'Konzernen noch mehr Macht geben' [Additional power to multinational corporations]; 'TTIP beschneidet die Menschenrechte' [TTIP cuts human rights]	'Ein Angriff auf Demokratie und Verbraucherrechte' [An attack on democracy and consumer rights]	'TTIP und CETA Stoppen!' [Stop TTIP and CETA]; 'Böse Saat' [Evil seeds]; 'CETA ist brandgefährlich' [CETA is extremely dangerous]
				'TTIP Stoppen' [Stop TTIP]; 'Stop CETA und TTIP' [Stop CETA and TTIP]; 'TTIP nicht mit uns' [TTIP—We will never agree]; 'Kommunale Daseinsvorsorge unter Liberalisierungsdruck' [Public services under pressure to privatise]; 'Wir werden CETA stoppen' [We will stop CETA]

Source: Bauer (2016a).

For details of the major anti-TTIP groups in Germany, see Bauer (2015b, c).

<sup>a</sup> See information provided by Attac Germany (n. d. a, n. d. b, n. d. c).

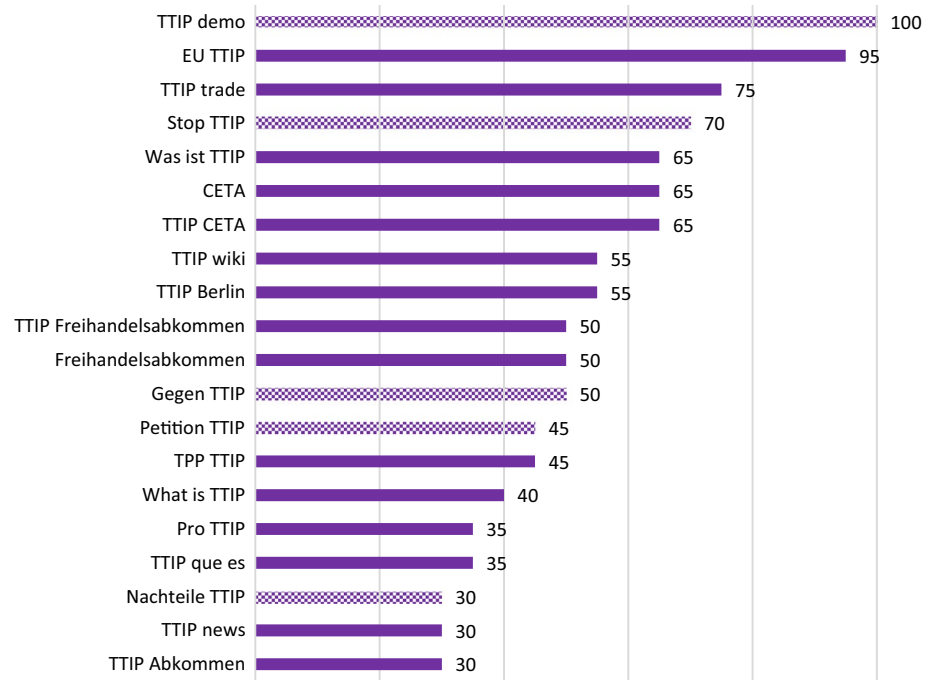
<sup>b</sup> See information provided by Campact (n. d.) and Strasser (2015).

<sup>c</sup> See information provided by Foodwatch Germany (2015a, b, 2016).

<sup>d</sup> See information provided by Greenpeace Germany (n. d., 2016).

<sup>e</sup> See information provided by BUND Germany (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz, Friends of the Earth Germany) (n. d., 2015).

**Figure 2 Most popular Google Search queries related to TTIP.**



Source: Google Trends (n. d.) and Bauer (2016a).

Note: Query conducted on 30 August 2016. Numbers do not convey absolute search volumes. Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart. If, for example, at most 10% of searches for the given region and time frame were for 'TTIP', it is taken as 100.

Solid coloured bars indicate queries conveying a negative sentiment regarding TTIP.

Covers period January 2013 to June 2016.

and TTIP'. Likewise, several heavily promoted online petitions, such as the anti-TTIP groups' call on email newsletter subscribers to contribute to the European Commission's online consultation on investment protection in 2015 (by completing forms made available to potential signatories), contributed to spreading dubious claims rather than fact-based, balanced information (see, e.g. Bauer 2015a; European Commission 2015).

## All politics is local: an analysis of TTIP-related information events in Germany

For TTIP-related information that is spread via social media, my previous analyses (Bauer 2015b, c) illustrate that there is a severe asymmetry in the content and sentiment of information about TTIP. This asymmetry is also reflected by the patterns in 'offline'



**Table 2** Validity check of claims spread by Germany's anti-TTIP groups.

Claim	Clarification by EU Commission <sup>a</sup> on TTIP	Clarification by EU Commission on CETA <sup>b,c</sup>
TTIP/CETA would allow the proliferation of GMOs in the EU	No. The EU has a strict system for deciding whether to allow companies to sell any given GMO in the EU. This is entirely separate from trade negotiations. The EU basic law on GMOs—including the European Food Safety Authority's safety assessment and risk management procedure—is not up for negotiation. It will not change as a result of TTIP	No. CETA does not affect EU restrictions on beef containing growth hormones or GMOs. See CETA text and European Commission summary clarification
TTIP/CETA is an attack on democracy and the right to regulate	No. (1) On investment protection and investor–state dispute settlement: TTIP does not stop governments from passing laws. But where new laws discriminate against foreign firms, it allows them to bring a claim for compensation. (2) On regulatory cooperation: TTIP will not overrule, repeal or amend EU legislation. The EU's 28 member countries and the European Parliament would have to approve any changes to EU laws or regulations in order to liberalise trade	No. See CETA text. The right to regulate is explicitly guaranteed in the investment protection chapter, trade and labour chapter, and trade and environment chapter
TTIP/CETA allows the US and/or multinational corporations to block EU laws	No. TTIP aims to encourage discussion about regulations. Although EU and US regulations are often very similar they sometimes achieve their aims in different ways. TTIP aims to encourage EU and US regulators to work more closely when setting new regulations, and to recognise each other's regulations where they provide equivalent protection	No. Under CETA, the EU and Canada have agreed to set up a Regulatory Cooperation Forum. The Forum will function as a voluntary cooperation mechanism to exchange experiences and relevant information among regulators, and to help identify areas where regulators could cooperate. It will not be able to change existing regulations or develop new legislation

Table 2 continued

Claim	Clarification by EU Commission <sup>a</sup> on TTIP	Clarification by EU Commission on CETA <sup>b,c</sup>
TTIP/CETA allows multinational corporations to sue EU governments for enforcing laws on consumer safety, health and environmental safety	No. EU laws set high standards that protect, among others, human life and health, animal health and welfare, the environment and consumers. In the EU, independent regulators advise governments on how strict these standards should be, based on the latest scientific research. TTIP will safeguard these standards and governments' right in the future to set them as high as they wish	No. See CETA text. The right to regulate is explicitly guaranteed in the investment protection chapter, trade and labour chapter, and trade and environment chapter

Source: Bauer (2016a).

<sup>a</sup> See information provided by the European Commission (2016b).

<sup>b</sup> See text provided by European Commission (2014).

<sup>c</sup> See summary information provided by the European Commission (2016a).

information events in Germany (Bauer 2016a). For the period February 2015 to February 2016, I analysed a unique and comprehensive dataset of 1,508 public information events on TTIP in order to shed light on those groups and individuals that played a dominant role in setting up the German and pan-European anti-TTIP grass-roots protest movement. The analysis is supplemented by additional information about the most prominent individuals and organisations in order to allow conclusions to be drawn about the underlying motivations and ideologies. A detailed description of the dataset and (coding) methodology is provided in Bauer (2016a). The major results are outlined below.

1. A majority of 66% of TTIP information event titles conveyed a neutral sentiment regarding TTIP. Thirty-one per cent of the TTIP event titles conveyed a negative message about TTIP. Only 3% of the TTIP event titles conveyed positive sentiments.
2. The majority of TTIP event organisers (58% of all registered events) are associations, organisations and political parties that were initially set up as or have declared membership of formal anti-TTIP campaigns in Germany (i.e. TTIPunfairhandelbar ('TTIP non-negotiable') and 'Stop TTIP'). Amongst others, these networks include Attac Germany, BUND, More Democracy (Mehr Demokratie), Compact and four well-established political parties in Germany: The Green Party, The Left, The Pirates Germany and the Ecological Democratic Party.
3. German businesses and business associations as well as Germany's Christian Democrats (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern, CDU–CSU) have shown relatively weak motivation to engage publicly in the debate. Only 11 and 1% of TTIP event organisers in Germany are business associations and individual businesses respectively. Those political parties that have not declared membership of a formal anti-TTIP campaign network account for 30% of TTIP events organised in Germany.
4. Germany's Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) politicians across the whole spectrum of political conviction (ranging from the conservative group Seeheimer Kreis ('Seeheim Circle') to the Parliamentary Left group) have frequently expressed ambiguous views on TTIP and sympathy for the protest groups' activities.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, if all of the 208 events organised by the SPD, which is more than twice the number of events organised by Germany's CDU–CSU, are ascribed to the TTIP protest organisations, the anti-TTIP scene controlled more than 75% of the local debate in Germany in the period under study.
5. Event numbers adjusted by voter support demonstrate that the SPD and the Green Party are more than three times as active in hosting and organising TTIP-related events than Germany's leading conservative political parties (the CDU–CSU). Moreover, Germany's The Left is more than twice as active as Germany's CDU–CSU.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, which is led by the SPD's Sigmar Gabriel, there are three more SPD-led ministries at the German federal government level that have a stake in TTIP: the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (which has directly provided generous public funding for the coordination office of the anti-TTIP campaign network TTIPunfairhandelbar; DNR 2013, 20), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection.

6. TTIP events' agenda setters predominantly chose subjects related to 'state and democracy' (126 mentions), 'communal or regional impact' (97 mentions) and 'consumer and health protection' (95 mentions). These issues strongly prevailed over other issues. In addition, issues related to the 'private sector' (businesses, industries and markets, 60 events) and 'environmental protection' (53 events) were among those subjects most frequently addressed by TTIP event organisers. Issues related to 'trade and economic growth' (24 events), 'jobs and employment' (13 events), 'competition' (3 events), 'innovation' (1 event) and 'investment' (2 events) have evidently not played such an important role in the discussions set up about TTIP.
7. The number of speakers affiliated with declared member organisations of anti-TTIP protest networks significantly outweighs the number of speakers affiliated with businesses and business associations. The great majority of speakers, who were largely presented as distinguished experts on TTIP, are affiliated with official members of declared anti-TTIP campaign groups in Germany (46%).
8. Speakers affiliated with the Green Party (225 speakers) and The Left (124 speakers) dominated in local TTIP debates. In addition, salient experts in the debates were affiliated with the Confederation of German Trade Unions (88 speakers), Attac Germany (an anti-globalisation, anti-corporate activist group, 83 speakers), More Democracy (an NGO promoting democracy and stronger citizen participation, 61 speakers) and BUND (57 speakers), or with local anti-TTIP groups (46 speakers).

In addition to speakers representing labour unions (193 speakers, including the Confederation of German Trade Unions), speakers affiliated with clerical organisations (103 speakers) such as the Catholic Labour Movement (35 speakers) and Bread for the World (an aid organisation of the German Evangelical/Protestant church, 13 speakers) were also frequently found as experts on TTIP panels. On the other hand, while speakers affiliated with environmental organisations (129 speakers) frequently appeared on TTIP panels, speakers affiliated with consumer protection organisations (30 speakers) were relatively under-represented.

The data shows that the number of speakers representing the top 2 most active anti-TTIP groups exceeded the number of speakers representing the top 20 most active business organisations. Moreover, the number of speakers representing the top 20 most active anti-TTIP groups exceeded the number of active TTIP experts from the top 20 business associations by more than 300%, and the total number of speakers affiliated with individual businesses (109 speakers) by more than 700%.

## Germany's most influential anti-TTIP figureheads

My analysis (Bauer [2016a](#)) shows that 37 of Germany's 50 most active speakers on TTIP either represent declared member organisations of Germany's formal anti-TTIP protest network (33 individuals) or have voiced strong aversion to TTIP (4 individuals; for a more detailed overview, see Bauer [2016b](#)).

It is particularly striking that a great majority of the top 50 anti-TTIP speakers, including politicians from Germany's Green Party, The Left and the SPD, are affiliated with more than one declared anti-TTIP organisation, for example with environmental organisations, clerical organisations and labour unions (for a more detailed overview, see Bauer 2016a). For example, Sven Giegold, who is a member of the European Parliament's Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, is an influential figurehead on Germany's anti-TTIP protest scene and one of its key backers. Giegold is affiliated with five of the campaign network's most influential groups. He is a co-founder of Attac Germany and an adviser to Campact, Germany's leading professional anti-TTIP campaign organisation (which was founded by Attac members in 2004, see DRadio 2015).<sup>3</sup> He is also officially affiliated with More Democracy and Friends of Nature (Naturfreunde), and a member of the steering board of Germany's Evangelical Church Conference. In addition, many of Germany's top anti-TTIP influencers are well-connected through membership of multiple political parties, labour unions, Christian organisations and think tanks, such as the Institut Solidarische Moderne, which provides a networking platform for opinion leaders in green and left-wing politics, the media, and cultural and academic institutions.

## German NGOs' attempts to take protests to other (European) countries

German anti-TTIP NGOs explicitly aim to take the protests to other European countries. The Berlin-based Forum for the Environment and Development (Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung) and Campact, a professional civil society campaign platform, are Germany's most influential anti-TTIP campaign organisations.<sup>4</sup> Together these organisations initiated Germany's first anti-TTIP campaign, 'TTIP non-negotiable'. The coordination centre for 'TTIP non-negotiable' is hosted by the Forum for the Environment and Development and is, to the surprise of many political observers, directly funded by Germany's Federal Ministry of the Environment (DNR 2013). Currently the Forum for the Environment and Development also hosts the coordination centre for the European anti-TTIP movement 'Stop TTIP' (Stop TTIP 2016). It initiated and still coordinates the 'self-organised' European citizens' initiative against TTIP.

Germany's Campact attempts to take German anti-TTIP protests to other EU countries too. The organisation has financed several civil society organisations in Europe, providing grants for anti-TTIP campaigns or infrastructure for political education for the anti-TTIP organisations PROGRESSI (Italy, €50,000), Skiftet (Sweden, €70,000), Uplift (Ireland, €50,000), Aufstehn (Austria, €25,000), and Fundacja Akcja Demokracja (Poland, €25,000). Campact has also provided funding to ActionStation (New Zealand,

<sup>3</sup> See also information provided by Campact (2016a).

<sup>4</sup> See DRadio (2015). For detailed information about the organisational background, missions and campaign activities of these organisations, see their webpages: <https://campact.org>, [www.forumue.de](http://www.forumue.de), [www.stop-ttip.org](http://www.stop-ttip.org) and <http://www.ttip-unfairhandelbar.de>.

€50,000) and GetUp (Australia, €41,069), two organisations that have set up political campaigns against the Transpacific Partnership Agreement (see Campact [2016b](#)).

Germany's Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, the government-funded political foundation of Germany's The Left, has organised anti-TTIP campaign trainings in Belgium (to 'build strategies to face the threats of TTIP'), Spain (to train 70 TTIP activists), Italy and several other countries in Europe (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung [2016a](#), [b](#); Stop TTIP Italia [2016](#)). In addition, the Seattle to Brussels Network, which actively supports anti-TTIP campaigning in Europe, is coordinated by a group of four individuals, of which three are experienced and well-connected German activists.<sup>5</sup>

In Germany (and Austria) influential civil society groups have managed to professionally exploit citizens' (largely uninformed) reservations about the US (latent anti-Americanism), Brussels-centred policymaking, multinational enterprises and economic globalisation. At the same time, high-level politicians as well as individual businesses and business associations have failed to provide easy-to-understand clarity about what TTIP is and what its aims are. Moreover, the European Commission's clarifications about why negotiations have to be behind closed doors have appeared deceptive and barely credible to citizens, politicians and the media alike.

Investor protection, hormone-fed beef and chlorine-washed chicken have become popular symbols of the widespread anxiety among European citizens, who fear a reduction in democratic participation, growing corporate influence and a loss of control over EU politics in general. Taken together, these developments have had an impact on the zeitgeist of globalisation in and beyond Germany. Powerful online media campaigns against TTIP have already cemented anti-globalisation views, not only among the broader public, but also among Europe's political elites. The ideas of globalisation are becoming less and less associated with personal liberties, economic freedom, a balance of power between the public and the private sector, accountable governments and, ultimately, peace.

## What is to be done by those in favour of open markets and pluralist societies?

In Germany, even the friends of open markets and competition have started to voice scepticism about TTIP. Some have even called for the trade agreement with the US to

<sup>5</sup> The Seattle to Brussels Network is a network of development, environmental, human rights, women's and farmers' organisations, trade unions and social movements, as well as research institutes.

be dropped.<sup>6</sup> For many politicians and businesses, it has become politically or economically expedient not to engage in the debate due to fear of losing one's individual or organisational reputation in the toxic debate. For those who still aim to make TTIP a success, however, three major themes must be taken into consideration: transparency, education and engagement.

As concerns transparency, TTIP proponents should point out that the negotiations should be based on three core principles: secrecy, stakeholder and civil society participation, and democratic ratification. Therefore, confidentiality during negotiations is the only way to avoid opportunistic interference and to protect 'common good' policy-making against excessively critical, sensation-seeking speculation expressed by vested business and/or NGO interests. The anti-TTIP debate offers a shining example of how guesswork-triggered myths spread by civil society organisations can become high-traffic viral stories on the Internet.

In the area of education, efforts need to be intensified to address fears and prejudices through the continuous provision of facts by the European Commission. This requires that (leading) politicians deal with the nitty-gritty of all of the texts that have been made publicly available in order to credibly make the case for TTIP. Making reference to the creation of jobs and additional economic growth, which is seen by many as speculation, if not deception, should not be the principle argument for TTIP.

As concerns engagement, individual politicians and (bourgeois) political parties, as well as individual businesses and business associations, must strengthen their efforts to promote TTIP as an instrument capable of changing societies from the bottom up, and not from the top down. Opinion leaders should promote TTIP as an agreement that encourages the exchange of ideas, which is a fundamental precondition for free, open and pluralist societies (see, e.g. Hirschman 2013). The effect of free cross-border trade between the EU and the US has not been given the attention it deserves.

For political parties, businesses and citizens that are interested in a transatlantic dialogue about high standards, good rules for fair competition and, not least, good rules for good society, it is time to begin to challenge the anti-TTIP propaganda in Germany, Austria and other European countries. Friends of open and pluralist societies, as well as supporters of the TTIP negotiations, should not blame the ill-informed and often anxious protesters on the streets, but confront the protest campaigns' 'puppet masters'. It is high time to hold them to account for provoking emotional responses among citizens by spreading lies, myths and anti-TTIP hate speech on the Internet and beyond.

<sup>6</sup> This view is especially strong in Germany where liberal intellectuals such as Hans Kundani and newspapers such as *Die Zeit* have argued in favour of declaring TTIP a failure. Moreover, informal associations such as Germany's Alliance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises against TTIP portray themselves as the majority opinion leaders among businesses and citizens. As the SPD has moved closer to taking a formal position against TTIP, several pro-trade commentators have argued that it is best to put TTIP to rest. In the *Financial Times*, a similar view has been taken by, among others, Wolfgang Münchau. Ana Palacio, the former Spanish foreign minister, and many others have also joined the chorus.

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